

## Pigeonhole Episode 31

[bright ambient music]

### Introduction

CHORUS OF VOICES: Pigeonholed, pigeonhole, pigeonhole, pigeonhole, pigeonhole, pigeonhole, pigeonhole, pigeonhole.

CHERYL: I'm beyond delighted to introduce you to another disabled-created and hosted podcast, *AAC Town*. AAC stands for alternative and augmentative communication, which they define in many ways across the episodes. But this isn't just a technical podcast or a show only for people who already know they're interested in learning about communication supports. You'll be drawn in right away by the wonderful blend of politics, culture, honesty, humor, and information that hosts Sam and endever\* wrap into their personal narratives and interviews. Here's their first episode, transcript courtesy of the *AAC Town* team.

### Introduction to *AAC Town*

ENDEVER\*: Welcome to *AAC Town*! Just because we don't speak doesn't mean we have nothing to say.

[short cheerful piano music]

ENDEVER\*: Welcome to *AAC Town*, everyone! This is hosted by endever\* and Sam, and this quick introductory episode will just be an orientation to who we are and why we use AAC.

...Not sure what AAC is? No problem! It stands for augmentative and alternative communication, which means any way of communicating besides speech. Usually people talking about AAC mean assistive technology like speech generating devices, or low tech communications supports like symbol based communication books or alphabet letterboards, but you might also consider things like handwriting, sign language, emails, gestures, and more as types of AAC.

[engine sound in the background]

...AAC is used by people with a lot of different disabilities as their primary mode of communication, but if you use an expanded definition of AAC, almost everyone communicates in some way besides speech! We're making this podcast because we want to normalize AAC, give you ideas on how to interact respectfully with AAC users you may encounter, and increase your knowledge about the different kinds of communication supports out there that may be useful to disabled people you know. Now let's tell you a little bit about us.

...First of all, my name is endever\* and my pronouns are they and them. I'm a mostly nonspeaking autistic. I'm thrilled to have discovered AAC and become part of the community of people who communicate in diverse ways, and I'm really excited to share my experience with AAC with you. My wish is that everyone with any difficulties with speech can get access to AAC when they are extremely young, nobody should have to wait until they're older to have ways of communicating that are comfortable for them. I love giving presentations about AAC to young people, families, students, and professionals, so I am excited to be on this podcast! In the rest of my time, I like writing, making crafts, and modding #AutChat, a weekly Twitter chat for autistic and similarly neurodivergent folks. If you want to find me elsewhere on the internet, my Twitter is [@endeverstar](#), my blog is

AnotherQueerAutistic.WordPress.com, and my Etsy is NerdcoreCrafts.etsy.com. Now, do you want to hear from my friend Sam?

SAM: Hello, my name is Sam Vranizan and I am 32 years old. I have lived in Portland my whole life. I have been looking for a job where I can educate and teach children for a while, and getting a job is more complicated for an AAC user, but I have not let that stop me. Augmentative and alternative communication, or AAC, is a term that reflects a variety of tools that replace or support natural speech. I volunteer at the zoo, Shriner's, and as a wrestling coach. I have a part-time job on the AAC Council at the PSU Design Lab, where I help design and organize social gatherings for the AAC community in Portland. A dream of mine is to work full time at Shriner's Hospital where I spent a lot of time as a kid. I am still working towards my dream job, and I am excited for what this opportunity could be.

...I have been using assistive technology since I was a kid. I had some bad teachers who didn't believe in me. When I was 14 there was a speech therapist who gave me a chance and taught me to use my first device. I still smile when I think about her because she helped me be able to speak to the general public. I think you should know this about my story because I want you to know how important your role can be in one person's life. It made such an impact in my life that I have tried to be an advocate for other AAC users.

...I am on the AAC Council, the AT Lab Committee, AT Social Group, and co-president of BCTAC which is a group of AAC users trying to bridge relationships in the community. I get so excited every time I go to BCTAC events and get to spend time with my peers. I also mentor a young AAC user who has cerebral palsy and reminds me of myself. I know how much it benefitted me to be around fellow AAC users, so I believe it is important to start modeling communication when kids are babies, and to realize they are not alone. In my experiences of being a mentor and an educator, I believe that this role would help me continue to fuel my passion to serve our community. I hope that through this experience I can demonstrate what AAC users can do, not just for other AAC users, but for everyone.

...In this podcast we are planning to feature experiences and wisdom from a variety of AAC users and people who support AAC users such as speech therapists, family, and friends. Our first episodes will be us interviewing each other to give you a better idea of who your hosts are, and then we'll have a variety of special guests to give you additional perspectives on AAC. We hope you'll keep listening and tell your friends and family about us – part of making the world more accessible and friendly to AAC users is sharing information that demystifies and destigmatizes our communication methods. If you have ideas for episode topics, guest speakers, or other questions we hope you'll email us at [AACTownPodcast@gmail.com](mailto:AACTownPodcast@gmail.com). Thanks for listening!

[short cheerful piano music]

## Wrap-up

[upbeat theme music]

CHERYL: Every episode is transcribed. Links, guest info, and transcripts are all at [WhoAmItoStopIt.com](http://WhoAmItoStopIt.com), my disability arts blog. I'm Cheryl, and...

TWO VOICES: this is Pigeonhole.

CHERYL: Pigeonhole: Don't sit where society puts you.